

WOMEN OF THE VALLEY:  
CULTURE, LEADERSHIP, GENDER, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SILICON  
VALLEY'S PROMINENT FEMALE LEADERS

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## **Abstract**

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Title: Women of the Valley: Culture, Leadership, Gender, and Emotional Intelligence in  
Silicon Valley's Prominent Female Leaders

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Silicon Valley has an infamous reputation for its lack of female leaders. The few women who have risen to power in the tech industry can attribute part of their successes to scarce female competition. Gender and leadership in business remain of considerable interest among researchers, particularly due to the underrepresentation of women in C-level leadership positions. This underrepresentation is even more prominent in Silicon Valley. The purpose of this thesis is to examine why four of Silicon Valley's most famous women became leaders, specifically in terms of emotional intelligence and prescribed gender traits. This thesis provides a qualitative analysis of the case studies of four female leaders, and results contribute to understanding the complex and dynamic intersections of gender, leadership, and the technology industry.

*Keywords:* gender and leadership, emotional intelligence, Silicon Valley, agentic and communal traits, women leadership advantage

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Silicon Valley natives preach about inspiring change and growth, and yet the tech culture and lack of female leaders contradict this mindset. The male influence in business is evident across America: from the “hot-shot finance guys” on Wall Street to the “brogrammer” culture in Silicon Valley. In tech, Women make up 37 percent of entry level technology employees and yet only hold 15 percent of C-level positions (Krivkovich, Kutcher, Yee, 2016). This discrepancy depicts that while women are entering the technology industry, very few advance their careers to leadership positions. Due to this disproportionate representation of women in technology, this thesis aims to understand the intersection between women leaders and Silicon Valley culture by examining the cases of four prominent female executives in Silicon Valley to show that women are well-suited for leadership in the tech industry.

### **Problem Statement**

While the world of Wall Street was previously known for its sexist male domination in the 90s, Silicon Valley has now become famous (or infamous depending on your viewpoint) for its lack of women leaders. Women hold only 24 percent of leadership positions at Google and 23 percent of those at Facebook, with more and more women dropping out of the workforce each day (Eadiccio, 2016). The inadequate number of female leaders makes the women who do climb to the top of the corporate ladder famous for their tenacity. Among the short list of famous Silicon Valley female executives, a few stars stand out for their poise, tenacity, and success: Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook; Susan Wojcicki, Chief Executive Officer of Youtube; Marissa Mayer, Chief Executive Officer of Yahoo; and Meg Whitman, Chief Executive Officer of HP and former Chief Executive Officer of eBay. This thesis examines the cases of these four powerful women in Silicon Valley to investigate how they managed to

navigate problematic cultural landscapes and lead at some of technology's most prominent companies.

### **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the context in which these women ascended to the top of their respective companies in Silicon Valley. This thesis specifically examines Silicon Valley culture, emotional intelligence, and prescribed gender traits to understand how these women effectively navigated the Silicon Valley cultural landscape to reach success. Some researchers of gendered leadership believe that these women displayed high levels of emotional intelligence. Psychological research studies indicate "that women have higher emotional intelligence than men [because] women are better at decoding nonverbal cues in the face, body, and voice, are more attentive and aware of emotions, and have more multifaceted emotional knowledge" (Thory, 2012). Levels of emotional intelligence are an important factor in determining an effective leader; however, societal expectations of prescribed gender traits also play a role.

Society expects men to display traits such as independence and ambition, and women to display traits such as cooperation and kindness. These gender roles are characterized by traits that are either "agentic" – traditionally masculine - or "communal" – traditionally feminine. Agentic traits such as ambition, self-direction, and confidence are traditionally associated with effective leadership. Communal traits like kindness, compassion, and openness are associated with femininity because they "inhibit aggressive behavior" (Eagly & Wood, 1991). Women are more naturally communal and effective leadership is associated with agency, thus the

thinking goes, a female leader must learn to balance communal and agentic qualities. This presents a difficult balancing act.

We are thus faced with a contradiction: women with high emotional intelligence have the tools for effective leadership – yet leadership is also associated with traditionally masculine traits. Based on existing research on emotional intelligence and prescribed gender traits, my two hypotheses are that Sandberg, Wojcicki, Mayer, and Whitman successfully navigated Silicon Valley's cultural landscape for specific reasons:

**H1:** Each of these women demonstrates a high level of emotional intelligence.

**H2:** They display the effective leadership traits that align with Silicon Valley culture, a culture that uniquely prizes a more feminized leadership style.

### **Research Questions**

The objective of this thesis is to determine which characteristics related to emotional intelligence and prescribed gender traits these four women exhibited throughout their careers.

The primary research question for this thesis is as follows:

**RQ1:** How did Sheryl Sandberg Sandberg, Marissa Mayer, Meg Whitman, and Susan Wojcicki reach success in the Silicon Valley C-suite?

Subsequent questions include the following:

- What components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skill) did these women display?
- What agentic and communal characteristics did these women exhibit on their path to success in business?
- How do agentic and communal traits align with Silicon Valley culture?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study intends to address the issue of the lack of female C-level executives in Silicon Valley by examining four of Silicon Valley's most prominent women and their paths to success. I use case studies in this thesis because they are useful at bringing understanding to real world problems and provide a foundation for the extension of methods. Using case studies to evaluate the paths Sandberg, Wojcicki, Mayer, and Whitman took, as well as the personality traits they displayed along their journeys, may help illuminate what holds women back in the technology industry and what characteristics it takes to succeed there. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to the extensive literature on gendered leadership by focusing specifically on women in Silicon Valley.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework is necessary to understand the dimensions of emotional intelligence and its hallmarks. This thesis uses Daniel Goleman's model for Emotional Intelligence in the workplace as a framework. Goleman's Framework on Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is useful because it specifically focuses on EQ in the workplace. A main principle of this framework is the belief that the "primary task of leadership is to focus attention" (Goleman, 2013). The ability to focus "inward and focusing constructively on others helps leaders cultivate the primary elements of emotional intelligence" (Goleman, 2013). These elements include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. This framework will be discussed in more detail in the literature review.



## Definition of Terms

The following concepts and definitions are prevalent throughout this thesis:

- *Goleman's Model for Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace*: The Theoretical Framework developed by Daniel Goleman that outlines emotional intelligence in the workplace.
- *Emotional Intelligence*: The ability to be aware of and effectively express your emotions, and to manage relationships effectively.
- *Agentic Traits*: Personality traits labeled as "stereotypically masculine" that lead to more directive behavior.
- *Communal Traits*: Personality traits labeled as "stereotypically feminine" that lead to more expressive and caring behavior.
- *Silicon Valley*: The geographical location ranging from San Francisco, CA to San Jose, CA where many of America's largest tech companies are headquartered.
- *C-Level Executive*: The highest level executives in senior management who usually have titles beginning with "chief" forming what is also called "The C-Suite".

## Limitations of the Study

- The information and data were gathered through secondary research and other studies.
- Due to the prominence of these women, I could not conduct in-person interviews.
- No new information was gathered for this study.

## Summary

Before delving into the research, I must explain my rationale for choosing these women.

Sheryl Sandberg, Susan Wojcicki, Marissa Mayer, and Meg Whitman are famous throughout Silicon Valley and as such many articles have been written about their successes and failures.

First and foremost, it was necessary to find enough research on each woman to conduct a thorough study, which required studying only prominent women in tech. I also wanted these women to have long tenures in Silicon Valley to better understand how they adjusted to the culture over time. Finally, I chose Sandberg, Wojcicki, Mayer, and Whitman because they were all C-level executives of Fortune 500 companies at similar stages in their careers. The findings from this thesis will help substantiate and illuminate the qualities necessary for women to succeed in Silicon Valley.

### **Literature Review**

Women in the workplace is a favored topic in both academia and popular culture. Women accounted for 52 percent of the workforce in 2015 according to the U.S. Labor department and yet women are still underrepresented across leadership positions. Only 17 percent of women held C-level positions in 2015 (McKinsey, 2015). This percentage varies across industries and is even lower for women in technology. Only 15 percent of women hold C-level positions in the technology field (Krivkovich, Kutcher, Yee, 2016). The advancement of women into leadership positions in tech depends largely on understanding the components of leadership theories, how these components pertain to women, and how they coincide with the culture inherent in Silicon Valley. The following sections first present a synthesis of existing literature on leadership theories, emotional intelligence, gender specific traits. Next, an assessment of the culture and values of Silicon Valley is provided.

### **Relevant Leadership Theories**

Researchers have studied the topic of leadership since the early 1900s. Trait theory was initially studied in the first half of the 19th century and proposed "that certain traits differentiate leaders from other individuals" (Choi, Colbert, Judge, Wang, 2012). In response to trait theory, scholars began researching leadership behaviors, in addition to specific traits, to evaluate specific behaviors successful leaders exhibited. The Contingency Theory of Leadership arose in the 1960s and according to this approach there is not a single psychological profile or set of specific traits that link directly to effective leadership. The contingency theory proposes that effective leadership is contingent on factors independent of an individual leader.

One of the more recent leadership styles (1990s) to have been studied is transformational versus transactional leadership (Bass, 1999). Transactional leadership is a more conventional type of leadership, whereas transformational leadership a more inspirational style. Transformational leadership was a term first coined by James McGregor Burns (1978). It is a leadership style many leaders observe in Silicon Valley and as such is worthy of discussion. Researchers defined transformational leadership "as future-oriented rather than present-oriented and as fostering followers' commitment and ability to contribute creatively to organizations" (Eagly, 2007). The transformational leader seeks to help their followers reach their highest potential of self actualization. They "establish oneself as a role model by gaining followers' trust and confidence" (Eagly, 2007). Bernard Bass, a prominent leadership researcher, asserts transformational leaders look past their own self-interests through "increased awareness and the arousal of higher level needs" to benefit the company overall (Bass, 1985).

This style of leadership elicited such positive feedback from organizations that transformational leadership evolved into one of the most popular leadership theories today. Most leadership research "has found the transformational style... to be more suited to leading the modern organization" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Ronald Riggio, professor of leadership and psychology, claims "evidence clearly shows that groups led by transformational leaders have higher levels of performance and satisfaction than groups led by other types of leaders" and attributes this high performance to the idea "that transformational leaders believe that their followers can do their best, leading members of the group to feel inspired and empowered" (Riggio, 2009). Research also suggests female leaders are "more transformational than male leaders" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Research tells us men and women have unique leadership styles, but women's approaches to leadership "are the more generally effective—while men's often are only somewhat effective" (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women possess certain abilities that allow them to excel in the transformational leadership approach (Simola, Barling, & Turner, 2010). Researchers believe the reason women excel in transformational leadership is because a transformational leadership approach employs the use of more communal qualities (Rosette & Tost, 2010).

A relatively new style of leadership was identified in the early 2000s and is usually termed "authentic leadership". This style of leadership proposed that authenticity in a leader is the new "gold standard for leadership" (Ibara, 2015). It is the notion that a leader adheres to their "true self" when leading an organization (Ibara, 2015). A more recent idea arose from the theory of authentic leadership: the belief that emotional intelligence is the most important aspect of leadership, which will be discussed in the next section (Goleman, 2004).

Leadership experts now believe transformational leadership is linked to emotional intelligence. Research shows that followers perceive leaders with a high EQ as "more effective and transformational" and having a high EQ has been proved to increase a person's transformational leadership behaviors (Singh & Atika, 2008). Daniel Goleman (1995) asserts a high level of emotional intelligence is what makes a leader, and this is the leadership ideal on which this thesis most heavily focuses.

### **Emotional Intelligence (EQ)**

The term emotional intelligence (EQ) is a relatively recent construct in the leadership field that has been consistently debated among researchers. EQ has "fast become popular as a means for identifying potentially effective leaders and as a tool for nurturing effective leadership skills" (Singh & Atika, 2008). One of the foremost contributors to the field of emotional intelligence in work is Daniel Goleman (1995) who developed a framework for EQ and coined the term "emotional quotient" as a contrasting approach to IQ (intelligence quotient). Goleman defines EQ "as a competency of managing yourself and your relationships with others, making effective teamwork, leading others, and forecasting the future" (Goleman, 2010).

Goleman's model of EQ has been criticized in research literature. Some claim it is simply a pop culture theory whereas others denounce EQ theory because it was not originally grounded in scientific research (Murphy, 2006). These criticisms were justified during the early years of EQ theory, but in "recent years the data landscape has shifted, with dozens, if not hundreds, of studies on EQ finished or in the research pipeline" (Goleman, 2006). While no theoretical framework is perfect, Goleman's model for EQ is widely accepted in business realms, making it an appropriate framework for this thesis.

## EQ Frameworks

The term "emotional intelligence" has become popular throughout workplace environments and is a favored research topic today. Many authors explored the concept of EQ with unique approaches and three main models emerged: the ability model, the trait model, and the mixed model. The ability model focuses on how individuals "perceive emotions accurately" using certain capabilities (Mayer et al., 2016). The trait model suggests that an individual's personality traits also affect their level of emotional intelligence. This model measures "emotion-related traits and self-perceived abilities... via self-report questionnaires" (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). The final framework of EQ is the mixed model, which combines capabilities and personality traits into one framework. Daniel Goleman's framework is a popular mixed model. Goleman's model of EQ in the workplace includes five main elements: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-regulation, (c) motivation, (d) empathy, and (e) social skill (Goleman, 2004). Figure 1 below describes each component in more detail.

**Figure 1:** The Five components of Emotional Intelligence at Work

### The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work

|                 | Definition  | Hallmarks  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Self-Awareness  | the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others                       | self-confidence<br>realistic self-assessment<br>self-deprecating sense of humor                              |
| Self-Regulation | the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods<br>the propensity to suspend judgment—to think before acting     | trustworthiness and integrity<br>comfort with ambiguity<br>openness to change                                |
| Motivation      | a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status<br>a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence          | strong drive to achieve<br>optimism, even in the face of failure<br>organizational commitment                |
| Empathy         | the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people<br>skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions | expertise in building and retaining talent<br>cross-cultural sensitivity<br>service to clients and customers |
| Social Skill    | proficiency in managing relationships and building networks<br>an ability to find common ground and build rapport                 | effectiveness in leading change<br>persuasiveness<br>expertise in building and leading teams                 |

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Source: Goleman, Daniel. (2004). *What Makes a Leader*. Harvard Business Review.

These components focus on the leader's relationships with their own emotions. For instance, a business leader with a high EQ is able to sense their employees feelings in the workplace, manage his or her own emotions, and react appropriately to the situation. Goleman posits that a leader contains the ability to set a "workplace climate" and that their emotional attitudes can effect change (Goleman, 2013). Research shows the most effective leaders integrate four or more components of Goleman's framework regularly, "substituting one for another more appropriate style depending on the leadership situation" (Batoool, 2013). This means a leader does not need to exhibit all components of Goleman's theory to be considered effective, but rather must integrate at least four components. In 2004, Goleman reformulated his framework for emotional intelligence so that it specifically applied to organization and job performance, in which he postulates that EQ is directly correlated to leadership effectiveness. Since Goleman's model focuses specifically on EQ as it related to the workplace, his model is most relevant for this thesis.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**

Leadership involves managing emotions, and the ability to monitor emotions in oneself and others is claimed to be a "more complex ability of emotional intelligence" (Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001). Leaders use and manage emotions every day in the workplace environment. Goleman found that, for a variety of job-levels, emotional skills "were almost twice as prevalent among distinguishing competencies as were technical skills and purely cognitive skills combined" (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Managing emotions is necessary for all employees and even more important for those in a leadership position. Goleman found that for individuals in leadership positions "85 percent of their competencies were in the EQ

domain" (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). The capabilities and traits characterized by his emotional intelligence framework lay a foundation for effective leadership, with the most effective leaders exhibiting high levels of emotional intelligence. Goleman popularized the framework of EQ in the workplace concluding that "emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership" (Goleman, 2004).

### **Gender and Emotional Intelligence**

Theories surrounding emotional intelligence challenge masculine approaches to leadership. The essence of emotional intelligence focuses on an inherently feminine construct: processing emotions and feelings. Women seem to "win in the EQ stakes because the concept challenges more masculinized workplaces, dominated by men who have historically determined what is appropriate emotional expression" (Thory, 2012). Women may have an advantage in leading with emotional intelligence because it seems to align with their innate characteristics. Women particularly excel in the domains of EQ relating to empathy, emotional awareness, and managing emotions. This new emphasis on EQ related "conceptions of femininity helps to explore how women may have a competitive advantage by embracing those aspects of EQ socially ascribed as women's skills" (Thory, 2012). Emotional intelligence is increasingly associated with effective leadership and thus women may take advantage of this opportunity by embracing the more feminine constructs of emotional intelligence theory.

### **Gender and Societal Expectations**

A dichotomy has long existed between how women are expected to behave by society and how they actually behave. Research in recent years aims to understand the tensions that exist between female characteristics and those associated with leadership ideals. Much of this research



posits that women are at a disadvantage "because of the perceived mismatch between the agentic traits ascribed to the prototypical leader and the communal traits associated with the female gender" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). The terms "agency" and "communion" encompass basic dimensions of traits. One of the most common distinctions made between genders are the stereotypically masculine traits, called agentic qualities, and the stereotypically feminine traits known as communal characteristics. Women tend to be more "relationship-oriented" and so traits related to that ideal are labeled communal. Men tend to be more "achievement-oriented" and thus traits that fit into that category are labeled agentic (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Figure 2 below defines agentic and communal traits.

**Figure 2:** Agentic and Communal Traits

| <i>Agentic Traits</i> | <i>Communal Traits</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Aggressive            | Caring                 |
| Ambitious             | Collaborative          |
| Assertive             | Communicative          |
| Competitive           | Cooperative            |
| Decisive              | Emotional              |
| Disciplined           | Expressive             |
| Forceful              | Friendly               |
| Intense               | Kind                   |
| Rational              | Loyal                  |
| Risk Taking           | Patient                |
| Self Reliant          | Sensitive              |
| Strong Personality    | Warmth                 |

Source: Eagly, Alice et. al. (2007). *The Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage: Resolving the Contradictions*. Psychology of Women's Quarterly.

Higher levels of agency, or agentic traits, are associated with good leadership. Research in the past proved that employees perceived successful middle managers as expressing more personality characteristics attributed to men than women (Schein, 1973). A more recent study

determined that "agency has a positive effect on leadership effectiveness" (Do & Minbashian, 2014). This high correlation between agentic qualities and effective leadership begets the idea that men make more effective leaders than women because they display more qualities associated with effective leadership.

However, there is an increasing perception that "communal characteristics may be largely beneficial in producing effective leadership" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Research "in the area of transformational leadership has repeatedly shown the benefits of using a communal approach to leading" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Agentic and communal traits now have the potential to overlap in both male and female leaders due to the evolution of more recent leadership styles such as authentic and transformational leadership. The emergence of new leadership fields, such as transformational and authentic styles, incorporate the importance of communal qualities (Thory, 2012).

### **Role Congruity**

Role Congruity theory proposes that a person will be positively or negatively evaluated depending on their adherence to expected social roles. Some researchers believe a prejudice exists "when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success in certain classes of social roles" (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In other words, when female leaders defy the societal expectation that women must be communal by displaying agentic leadership qualities they are subjected to the perception that they do not conform to their expected gender role. Since research suggests effective leaders possess agentic qualities and women are communal in nature, women find themselves in a bind. If women are "highly communal, they may be criticized for not being agentic enough" and if

they exhibit highly agentic qualities some people may critique them for lacking communion (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This may give the impression "that they don't have 'the right stuff' for powerful jobs" (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Role congruity theory predicts that "female top leaders may be particularly susceptible to negative communal evaluations because they may be perceived as violating the prescriptive norms of their communal gender roles" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). However, it is possible that in an environment where communal qualities are valued as a part of a leader's abilities, women "leaders would receive high ratings on their communal abilities because a feminized approach to managing others is increasingly viewed as a strength" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). This is potentially the case for Silicon Valley. Research shows Silicon Valley employees value more communal qualities as a part of their culture, therefore implying women might have more of an advantage as effective leaders in Silicon Valley than in other business landscapes (Harris & Alter, 2017). Due to the technology industry's evident lack of female leaders, yet the contrasting evidence that women make effective leaders in Silicon Valley, the discussion is now shifting to the analysis of Silicon Valley's cultural landscape and values to better understand this disconnect.

### **Changing Expectations of Gender in Business**

Effective women leaders "violate standards for their gender when they manifest male-stereotypical agentic attributes" (Eagly & Karau, 2003). People often "expect and prefer that women be communal, manifesting traits such as kindness, concern for others, warmth, and gentleness and that men be agentic, manifesting traits such as confidence, aggressiveness, and self-direction" (Eagly, 2007). Therefore, effective women leaders must balance their agentic and communal qualities in order to be considered a successful leader. Women in more traditional

business industries are at a greater risk of receiving negative feedback because their supervisors are more likely to endorse "traditional gender roles" (Eagly & Karau, 2003). While this balancing act is especially difficult for women in more traditional industries, many contemporary businesses now place a higher value on stereotypically feminine traits. There is "a growing realization that men are feminizing their skills in accordance with societal and organizational norms" and therefore can benefit from embracing more feminine attributes especially in white collar professions (Thory, 2012). Many male leaders today, especially in fast-paced environments such as Silicon Valley, exemplify this conception. For example, Sundar Pichai, current CEO of Google, exhibits certain communal qualities in this quote:

As a leader, a lot of your job is to make those people successful. It's less about trying to be successful [yourself], and more about making sure you have good people and your work is to remove that barrier, remove roadblocks for them so that they can be successful in what they do. So that's how I've always thought about it.... I also value teamwork quite a bit and I think it's really important to build organizations where people really want to work together. Everything comes out of that. So, setting up collaborative cultures is another big thing I've been trying to focus on.

Pichai shows a commitment to communal aspects in leadership styles including teamwork and collaboration. Pichai is just one example of the changing landscape. Agentic characteristics "have traditionally defined the leader role," although "communal traits and behaviors are increasingly becoming valued leadership characteristics" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Early and Karau suggested that female top leaders are potentially more susceptible to negative evaluations because they are perceived as "violating the prescriptive norms of their communal gender roles"; however, Rosette and Tost hypothesize that instead, "women top leaders would receive high ratings on their communal abilities because a feminized approach to managing others is increasingly viewed as a strength" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). This research highlights the

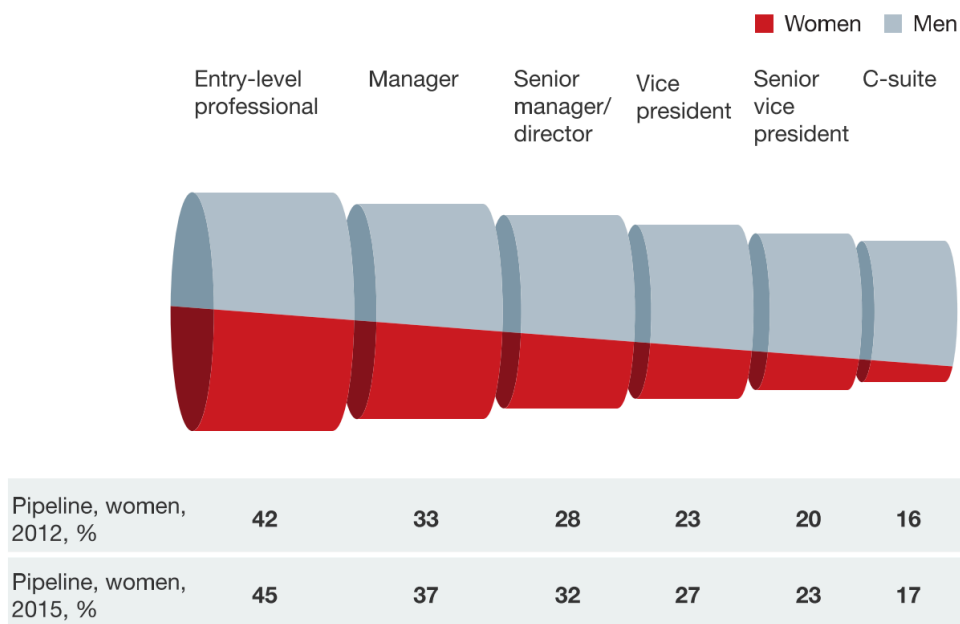
changing narrative of women's leadership and suggests that one of the most effective ways for women to succeed in the workplace is to combine “agentic behavior with warm, communal behavior” (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Since Silicon Valley values communal qualities and transformational approaches to leadership, it is natural to think women would excel in Silicon Valley as leaders, yet this is not the case.

### The Pipeline Issue

McKinsey and Company conducted a study of women in the workplace in 2015 and found that while 45 percent of entry level employees were female, only 17 percent of women held C-Level positions. Figure 3 further illustrates this point.

**Figure 3: Corporate Talent Pipeline**

**Corporate-talent pipeline by gender**



Source: Data for 2012 are from *Unlocking the full potential of women at work*, in which McKinsey examined the employee pipeline of 60 US corporations. Data for 2015 are from *Women in the Workplace*, in which LeanIn.Org and McKinsey examined the employee pipeline of 118 US corporations

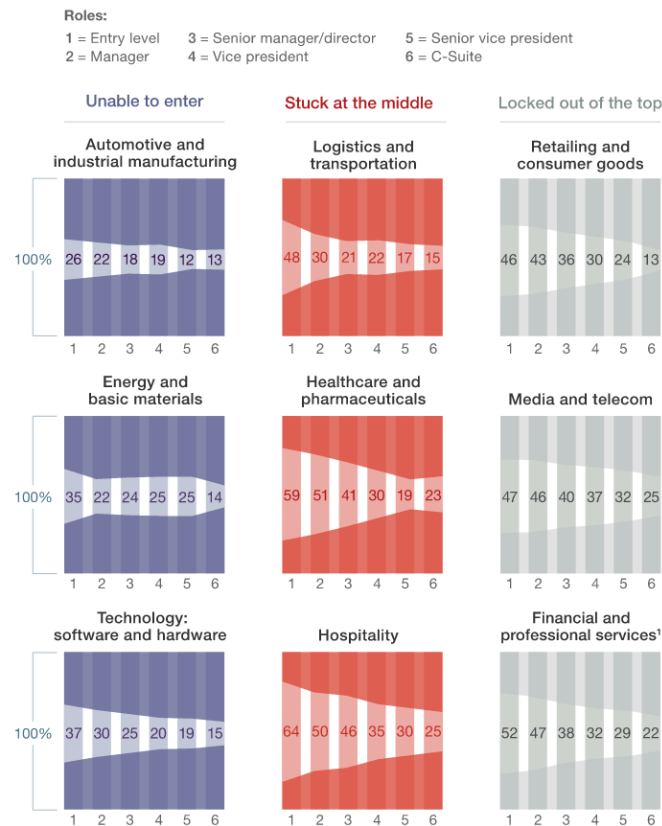
The trendy mantra, "The Future is Female" indicates, among other things, a growing narrative that women can and should be leaders. Women can reinvent business through "openness, fairness, and social responsibility" by employing transformational and authentic leadership styles (Thory, 2012). Yet, even though popular culture tends to stress the importance of women leaders in business, corporations still lag behind. Women are not advancing to upper level management roles as easily as men, and this is partly because resistance to women's leadership is highest in male dominated industries or "masculine domains" (Eagly, 2008). Eagly argues that "men's effectiveness as leaders surpassed women in roles that were male dominated or masculine in other ways" (Eagly, 2007). Eagly asserts that women are perceived as less effective in traditionally male dominated roles and industries (Eagly, 2007). Women are at a disadvantage in predominantly male environments because these types of cultures make it more difficult for women to feel comfortable and to gain authority (Eagly, 2007).

### **Women Leaders in the Tech Industry**

The discussion is shifting to analyze Silicon Valley's leadership culture since leaders in the technology industry employ transformational leadership styles and communal qualities, both of which are aligned with women's leadership, and yet the industry is dominated by men. Research has proven time and again that women exhibit many valuable communal leadership traits such as cooperation, mentoring, and collaboration, yet women lag behind men in most upper level management roles. According to a recent study done by McKinsey, women account for only 30 percent of manager roles in the tech industry. This number drops to 15 percent at the C-level position in the tech industry. The lack of female leadership is not only prevalent in tech, but is evident across industries. Women account for 47 percent of manager positions in the

financial sector, but only 22 percent of C-level financial positions are held by women (Krivkovich, Kutcher, Yee, 2016). The lack of women in upper level management roles is even more stark at the CEO level. As of 2016, women only hold 4.2 percent of CEO positions at Fortune 500 companies (Zarya, 2016). Depending on the industry, women are either unable to progress into upper level management or they lack the necessary support to climb the corporate ladder to C-Level positions. While the promotion of women to leadership roles is convoluted, these statistics prove that even in 2017, men dominate upper level management positions in business. Women are uniquely suited to leadership positions, yet may face barriers to entry early in their careers. Figure 4 depicts the percentage of women at various stages of their careers across industries.

**Figure 4: Percentage of Women Across Business Industries**



<sup>1</sup>Includes banking, consumer finance, and insurance.

Source: 2015 joint research by Leanin.org and McKinsey; data collected from 30,000 employees at 118 companies across nine industries

It is no secret that men dominate in places like Silicon Valley. Google reported that only 31 percent of its workforce is female, which is a 1 percent increase from 2015. The figures are even worse for technical and leadership roles. Women hold only 19 percent of Google's technical roles and 24 percent of leadership positions (Eadiccio, 2016). These figures remain the same for many companies in Silicon Valley. Women hold 28 percent of leadership positions at Apple and 23 percent of leadership roles at Facebook. An important factor to note is that a "leadership role" can be anything from a manager to a C-level executive. The percentage of female C-level executives across Silicon Valley companies is much lower than 23 percent.

The lack of women leaders in Silicon Valley makes the ones that do manage to make their way to the C-Level famous for shattering the seemingly unbreakable glass ceiling. Sheryl Sandberg, Marissa Mayer, Susan Wojcicki, and Meg Whitman have managed to endure the pressures of Silicon Valley when so many other women left the industry. These women set themselves apart from the many women leaving Silicon Valley's tech industry because the qualities they display throughout their careers are the same qualities that align with Silicon Valley culture. This suggests a potential disconnect: If women are well-suited to leadership roles in Silicon Valley, why are there so few female executives?

### **Unique Values of Silicon Valley Culture**

To better understand how these women were able to navigate the Silicon Valley landscape, it is imperative to discuss the conversation surrounding the area's unique culture. Silicon Valley is home to some of America's most prominent companies: Apple, Facebook, Oracle, Google, HP, and Yahoo! and they have managed to create a specific culture. Accenture conducted a recent study of Silicon Valley's culture to determine what exactly sets this culture



apart from the rest of the corporate world. Accenture found that there are five dimensions that create the iconic Silicon Valley culture:

- Laid back, but ready for action
- Committed, yet independent
- Competitive, yet cooperative
- Pragmatic, yet optimistic
- Extrinsically motivated, yet intrinsically fulfilled

The secrets to Silicon Valley's success were created and nurtured based on these components. In this qualitative study, Accenture surveyed over 600 full-time IT professionals and conducted additional interviews with CIOs from Silicon Valley companies inside and outside the high-tech field, as well as with entrepreneurs and venture capitalists (Harris & Alter, 2017). The following sections will delve into more detail about these five components to figure out what qualities and abilities Silicon Valley values as a culture.

The first secret exposed about Silicon Valley's culture is that it is "laid back, but ready for action". Silicon Valley is situated in California and thus experiences the stereotypical laid back California way of life, although the "behavioral flip side includes a frenetic pace and aggressive deadlines" where "product development cycles for many companies typically span just weeks, not months" (Harris & Alter, 2017). Silicon Valley is not for perfectionists. Companies place an emphasis on "getting things done quickly rather than agonizing over every potential flaw" making quick decision making a necessary characteristic for success (Harris & Alter, 2017).

Silicon Valley culture is also known to be committed, yet independent according to Harris and Alter's findings. Employees are extremely loyal to technology's mission. Their commitment

is "to the larger overall cause of creating the technological future" (Harris & Alter, 2017).

Employees in Silicon Valley have a tendency to move from one job to the next, in search for the next life changing idea. They want to effect change in the world around them and so they are constantly looking for the best possible way to achieve this goal.

Silicon Valley is known for its ruthless competition. TV Shows like "Shark Tank" show the aggressiveness and cut-throat attitudes of some Venture Capitalists in Silicon Valley. While the competition is fierce, there is a "pervasive attitude of cooperation" because everyone is striving towards a common goal: to make the world a better place (Harris & Alter, 2017). Silicon Valley employees also realize the value of peer networks. They engage in networks outside their own respective companies to come together and interact. This interaction feeds the cooperative nature of Silicon Valley and balances its competitive side.

People in Silicon Valley understand the importance of failure. They are pragmatic in the sense that they understand "successes are typically built on many failures... [and that] failure is part of the process" (Harris & Alter, 2017). However, Silicon Valley employees are also inherently optimistic. They "believe most problems can be solved with enough effort" (Harris & Alter, 2017). This combination of pragmatism and optimism created two hallmarks as part of the culture: resilience and risk-taking. The belief that most problems can be solved requires resilience to keep solving the problem and encourages prudent risk-taking. More than 50 percent of the Silicon Valley high-tech professionals surveyed "consider their company to be a high risk taker, compared with just 25 percent of non-Silicon Valley respondents" (Harris & Alter, 2017). Silicon Valley was built on failures and its' members optimism is the reason it stands today.

It comes as no surprise that employees are motivated by money. There is a reason sales people are paid commission rather than just a salary, and Silicon Valley employees hold this same perception. Employees in the valley are "powerfully motivated by the extrinsic reward of financial remuneration", but where they differ from other business industries is that they are also "deeply fulfilled by intrinsic rewards" (Harris & Alter). According to the respondents surveyed, 46 percent of them said that would do their job for less money (Harris & Alter). People in Silicon Valley greatly value an intellectual challenge and enjoy developing innovative ways to solve problems. Almost 50 percent of the Valley professionals in Accenture's survey said that for "fun," they work on tech projects in their free time (Harris & Alter). The most effective leaders in Silicon Valley know how to provide challenging and rewarding work to their employees.

Based on the components of Accenture's survey, Silicon Valley culture places a high emphasis on having both agentic and communal qualities, which could be an advantage for women. Previous research on role congruity "indicated that women who violate gender role expectations by exhibiting agentic traits risk being judged as insufficiently communal." However, since Silicon Valley values both agentic and communal qualities in their culture, women leaders are potentially perceived as being more effective by displaying both agency and communion. Accenture's survey results provide interesting insight into Silicon Valley culture and, moving forward, these aspects of culture will be important in outlining results. The five components described in detail throughout this section focus on the positive cultural aspects of Silicon Valley. The following section will delve into the dark side of Silicon Valley to paint a more complete picture.

### **The Dark Side of Silicon Valley Culture**

The number of women in tech roles significantly lags behind many other industries, and on top of this fact, women are 45 percent more likely than men to leave their roles in the technology industry within their first year of work (McGregor, 2014). Issues that contribute to this disappointing retention rate include “promote yourself” systems and a sexist or “brogrammer” culture.

Many companies in Silicon Valley pride themselves on being what they call a meritocracy; they promote employees based on merit. Google is a prime example of this system. Google promotes individuals based on talent, although there is one caveat: a person must nominate his or her self for a promotion. Google implemented a “self-nomination” promotion system to allow employees to take control of their career development, and unsurprisingly men nominate themselves for a promotion more than women (Sandberg, 2013). These types of promotions, so common in the tech world, create a meritocratic culture. While this sort of system benefits men, who are more likely to take risks in their career advancement, it stalls women in their careers. When a company “sees itself as a meritocracy, women are actually more likely to get smaller bonuses than men with equivalent performance reviews” (Williams, 2014). Since most women are less likely to nominate themselves in a meritocracy and most tech companies operate on this kind of system, this creates a barrier to career advancement for many women in Silicon Valley.

The idea of a meritocracy sounds good in theory, but many Silicon Valley employees oppose this idea. According to a recent survey sent out by The Atlantic, men are “three times as likely as women to say Silicon Valley is a meritocracy” (LaFrance, 2016). Many women in

Silicon Valley feel success in the industry is not solely based on competence, but rather there are other factors at play. More men adhere to the perception that Silicon Valley is a true meritocracy because they have reaped some of the benefits of the “promote yourself” system. The Atlantic’s survey shows there are two versions of Silicon Valley: the one the men see, and the one the women experience.

Women experience a different side of Silicon Valley in another crucial way. While the tech industry may not be blatantly misogynistic, there is an undercurrent of sexism. Nina Burleigh from The New Yorker, goes so far as to say that Silicon Valley “echoes the ‘Wolf of Wall Street’ culture in the ‘80s and ‘90s” (Burleigh, 2015). Burleigh claims Silicon Valley is brimming with “socially stunted boy-men” who create a particularly rough environment for young women. A passionate group of seven women set out to prove women experience a different side of Silicon Valley than men by surveying over 200 women in the bay area. They called this survey The Elephant in the Valley. This survey found that 60 percent of women in tech experienced unwanted sexual advances. While most of these sexual advances do not create a conspicuously unsafe environment for women, they impede a woman from feeling comfortable enough in her work environment to do her job well. Below are a few anecdotes from the anonymous women surveyed.

Once a client asked me to sit on his lap if he wanted to buy my products. My company didn't do anything about it when I told my boss so unfortunately I asked to be taken off that client but it's not like they can fire the client.

Company off-sites and industry conferences are hotbeds of sexist activity, from excluding female colleagues from guy outings (e.g., golf, skiing) to drunken sexually charged conversations to late night searches for hook ups. For example, during an investors/CEO meeting in Jackson Hole, the men at the meeting were planning the ski

day and they projected an assumption I was not going to be able to keep up. I kicked their asses on the slope the next day. Suddenly, my brand equity improved.

I had a fellow VC sending me flowers, gifts, even a mix-tape, over the course of several months. Another portfolio CEO asked me to go through a door first so he could "watch me walk" and my superiors at the firm told me to laugh it off. I also had another VC tell me he likes married women and put his hand on mine. (I'm married)

Sexism in the technology industry comes in all shades. The misogynistic culture evident in Silicon Valley ranges from these not-so-subtle sexist situations described above to legitimate sexual threats. Many of these women reported that these types of sexual advances and experience were more common when they were younger in their 20s and 30s, which potentially contributes to the high attrition rate of women in technology.

A few women have managed to traverse the technology ecosystem while navigating Silicon Valley's landscape. These women stand out from the crowd because there are so few women with whom to compare. The obstacles present in Silicon Valley "require an especially strong, skillful, and persistent woman" to advance a "highly male dominated hierarchy" (Eagly, 2007). This thesis aims to understand how Sheryl Sandberg, Marissa Mayer, Susan Wojcicki, and Meg Whitman managed to climb their way to the C-Suite and navigate an industry that is consistently critiqued for its negative treatment of women with the hope that both future young women and the tech industry itself can learn from these women's experiences.

### **EQ and Silicon Valley**

Emotional intelligence plays a big role in Silicon Valley. Many of the tech companies located in this area are changing the world, and they must work together to make that change happen. Working as a team requires effectively managing relationships and building rapport with one's audience. Companies like Google and Facebook are exploring how EQ fits into the

intelligent workplace today. Based on the concepts of emotional intelligence, "Google developed an employee training program that supports reflection over reactivity and teaches a particular practice of meditation called mindfulness" (Goodman, 2015). Google clearly values emotional intelligence in the workplace and wants to implement programs that assist in developing EQ. Facebook is another company that realizes EQ's importance. The company is trying to develop tools to help combat cyberbullying and "is using emotional intelligence and millions of data points to facilitate better connections between its users" (Goodman, 2015). These cases illustrate that companies in Silicon Valley are beginning to learn the value of EQ in the workplace. This could pose an advantage for women since female leaders are perceived as more emotionally intelligent than men (Thory, 2012).

### **Method**

This thesis is a qualitative study designed to examine the personality characteristics and level of emotional intelligence in four prominent women in Silicon Valley to ultimately determine their commonalities and differences. The following assumptions, analysis, and considerations can be made in selecting the appropriate design for this study:

- Determine a relationship between personality characteristics and success; not causation.
- Analysis of qualitative data effectively tests the hypothesis.

### **Purpose of this Study**

This thesis aims to examine four prominent women in Silicon Valley and their paths to success in the technology sector. The four women studied in this thesis are: Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operations Officer of Facebook; Susan Wojcicki, Chief Executive Officer of Youtube;

Marissa Mayer, Chief Executive Officer of Yahoo!; Meg Whitman, Chief Executive Officer of HP and former CEO of eBay. I propose two hypotheses as to why these women succeeded in Silicon Valley:

**H1:** Each of these women demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence.

**H2:** They all display the personality characteristics that align with Silicon Valley culture, a culture that uniquely prizes a more feminized leadership style.

A qualitative analysis of leadership narratives is used to determine the level of emotional intelligence these women exhibit and provide an understanding of the characteristics these women share.

### **Research Design & Procedure**

The nature of this thesis depends on qualitative, rather than quantitative, data. A qualitative research design "allows the researcher to explore and identify whether a relationship exists and to what extent it exists between two or more variables" (Morse, 2014). The quantitative research design was chosen for this thesis to allow for an examination of the personality characteristics and emotional intelligence levels of each of these women. Evidence for this thesis is taken from autobiographies, biographies, online interviews, opinion editorials, blog posts, and news articles about these four women. Since this thesis is based on two hypotheses to explain why these women succeeded in Silicon Valley, I first compare the qualitative evidence gathered with Goleman's model of Emotional Intelligence in the workplace (EQ) to determine the level of EQ these women display. I then assess the levels of agency and communion these women exhibit from quotations and compare that evidence with McKinsey Company's research on Silicon Valley culture.



### **Appropriateness of the Design**

A qualitative research design "allows the researcher to explore and identify whether a relationship exists and to what extent it exists between two or more variables" (Morse, 2014). This research design was chosen to allow for an examination of the personality characteristics and emotional intelligence levels of each of these women.

This thesis is limited in nature because only four subjects are studied; however, case study research builds upon previous research by adding strength to what is already known. Case studies excel at bringing understanding to real world problems and provide a foundation for the extension of methods. A good case example can "illuminate the working of a social system" (Gluckman, 1961). My goal for this research was to shed light on women's role in Silicon Valley culture by providing real life examples.

Unlike quantitative methods, a qualitative research approach is designed to gain insight into and explore the depth and complexity inherent in a phenomenon; however, "qualitative research does not allow researchers to gather cause-and-effect relationships through fact-finding exercises involving numerical data" (Morse, 2014). This research derives from secondary research based on others' opinions; I was not able to conduct in-person interviews due to the prominence of these women and their respective positions. While I was not able to conduct in-person interviews, the prominent nature of these women means there is a plethora of evidence available online.

Another limitation to consider is the variation in the sources. The evidence based on statements made from the women themselves have an inherent bias; these women want a certain image to be portrayed to the media and so they will tell that narrative as they see fit. Outside

information from colleagues, coworkers, and interviewers also has the potential for bias.

Information regarding these women's failures, opinions from others that their success can be attributed to factors other than their ability, or information that emerges as an emotional response all have a potential for bias.

## **Results**

The following section sets out the findings in detail of research from autobiographies, biographies, online speeches, opinion editorials, and interviews from these four women. The research presented comes directly from these women, their colleagues, or other business writers. The following research sets out to prove, or disprove, two hypotheses:

**H1:** Each of these women demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence.

**H2:** They display effective leadership characteristics that align with Silicon Valley culture, a culture that uniquely prizes a more feminized leadership style.

To illustrate the first hypothesis, the quotes from Sandberg, Wojcicki, Mayer, and Whitman are divided into categories based on Daniel Goleman's framework for emotional intelligence at work: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill. Once divided, evidence is then analyzed for the agentic and communal qualities they display and split into sections based on Accenture's survey results of Silicon Valley culture. The following chart on the next page provides a brief overview of each woman:

**Figure 5:** An Overview of the Women Studied in this Thesis

| Name            | Family Status  | Age | Education  | Roles  |
|-----------------|--|-----|--|--|
| Sheryl Sandberg | Spouse(s):<br>Brian Kraff (married 1993;<br>divorced 1994)<br>Dave Goldberg (married in<br>2004 at age 35; died 2015)<br><br>Children: 2<br>First child born at 36 | 47  | Harvard College (B.A.)<br>Harvard Business School<br>(M.B.A.)  | Management Consultant, McKinsey and Co. (1995)<br>Chief of Staff, U.S. Treasury (1996)<br>Vice President of Global Sales and Operations,<br>Google (2001)<br>Chief Operating Officer, Facebook (2008)  |
| Marissa Mayer   | Spouse:<br>Zachary Bogue (married 2009<br>at age 34)<br><br>Children: 3<br>First child at 35   | 41  | Stanford University (B.S.)<br>Stanford University (M.S.)   | Engineer, Google (1999)<br>Vice President of Google Product Search (2005)<br>Chief Executive Officer, Yahoo! (2012)  |
| Susan Wojcicki  | Spouse:<br>Dennis Troper (married in<br>1998 at age 30)<br><br>Children: 5<br>First child at 32  | 48  | Harvard College (B.A.)<br>University of California,<br>Santa Cruz (M.S.)<br>UCLA Anderson School of<br>Management (M.B.A.) | Marketing Manager, Google (1999)<br>Senior Vice President of Advertising and<br>Commerce, Google (2006)<br>Chief Executive Officer, Youtube (2014)   |
| Meg Whitman     | Spouse:<br>Griffith Harsh (married in<br>1980 at age 23)<br><br>Children: 2<br>First child at the age of 29  | 60  | Princeton University (B.A.)<br>Harvard Business School<br>(M.B.A.)   | Brand Manager, Procter and Gamble (1979)<br>Senior Vice President, Bain and Company<br>Vice President of Strategic Planning, Disney (1989)<br>Division General Manager, Hasbro (1997)<br>Chief Executive Officer, eBay (1998)<br>Chief Executive Officer, Hewlett Packard (2011) |

### **Components of Emotional Intelligence**

Daniel Goleman asserts that effective leaders know how to "direct attention" through focus. Focusing inward on one's own emotions and "focusing constructively on others helps leaders cultivate the primary elements of emotional intelligence" (Goleman, 2013). Goleman's framework for EQ in the workplace centers around five main components and these components derived from his belief that effective leaders know how to focus on themselves, on others, and on the world in which they live (Goleman, 2013). These components are aligned with certain hallmarks. A hallmark is a "sure sign" of the EQ component (Tanzim, 2016). For instance, self-regulation is necessary to be comfortable with ambiguity and so by expressing a comfort with ambiguity it is sufficient to conclude the self-regulation component of EQ exists in the individual. Thus, the presence of certain hallmarks confirms presence of the EQ component. The following sections seek to prove these four women depict a high level of emotional intelligence by aligning their personal quotations with Goleman's framework. It is important to note that the most effective leaders will display at least four components of Goleman's theory of EQ.

#### **Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is the first component to Goleman's model for Emotional Intelligence in the workplace. Self-awareness means "having a deep understanding of your emotions, needs, and drives" (Goleman, 2004). One of the main characteristics comprised in this component of EQ is honesty. Leaders with a high level of self-awareness "are honest with themselves and with others" (Goleman, 2004). They understand how their emotions affect the world around them and how others' emotions affect their own. A high level of self-awareness also manifests as "candor and an ability to assess oneself realistically" (Goleman, 2014). Marissa Mayer and Meg Whitman

both speak of their personality characteristics with candor and assess these characteristics realistically. In an interview with the *LA Times*, Mayer claims:

I am shy, but no one here at Google would ever believe that. Because I am comfortable here. Finding some place where you are comfortable really helps break the barriers of feeling shy or self-conscious (Guynn, 2011).

While Mayer exhibits a realistic self assessment regarding her shyness, Whitman displays the same level of awareness but with a different personality characteristic, according to her autobiography, *The Power of Many*:

I love to socialize, love to team up. I'm an extrovert. When I was a little girl, my friends' mothers would sometimes call my mother in the middle of a play-date and plead, "Can you please come pick up Meg? She's worn my daughter out. (Whitman, 2010)

Both Mayer and Whitman speak openly of their personality characteristics and understand how they affect the environment around them. Another hallmark of self-awareness is the ability to understand your abilities, weaknesses, and drives. Sheryl Sandberg and Susan Wojcicki show this hallmark when speaking about their failures and weaknesses. Sheryl Sandberg admits in her autobiography, *Lean In*:

I try to foster authentic communication [by speaking] openly about my own weaknesses. To highlight just one, I have a tendency to get impatient about unresolved situations" (Sandberg, 2016).

Sandberg is aware of her own weaknesses and shows candor by openly speaking about them.

Much like Sandberg, Susan Wojcicki openly speaks about her weakness in an interview with *Forbes*:

I am not very good at following instructions. I prefer to figure out how to do something myself. Sometimes this is not very practical but results in an interesting outcome.

Based on this evidence, all of these women show an openness and willingness to discuss their personality characteristics. For Mayer and Whitman, this manifests through understanding how their personalities affect their surrounding environment. Whereas Sandberg and Wojcicki exhibit self-awareness through their ability to recognize their weaknesses and a willingness to discuss their failures. The realistic self assessments these women conduct of their abilities indicates the presence of self-awareness.

### **Self-Regulation**

Self-awareness is the capacity to understand and be aware of your own emotions, so naturally self-regulation is the ability to control those emotions. Leaders who exhibit a high level of self-regulation are able to control their emotions and "channel them in useful ways" (Goleman, 2004). They pick their words carefully, do not rush to make hasty judgements, and can "roll with the changes" according to Goleman. Sandberg has dealt with some charged emotional situations in the past and openly discusses them in her autobiography, *Lean In*:

When I first arrived at Facebook, a local blog devoted some serious pixels to trashing me. They posted a picture of me and superimposed a gun into my hand. They wrote "liar" in big red letters across my face. Anonymous sources labeled me "two-faced" and "about to ruin Facebook forever." I cried. I lost some sleep. I worried that my career was over. Then I told myself it didn't matter. Then everyone else told me it didn't matter—which only reminded me that they were reading these awful comments too. I fantasized about all sorts of rejoinders, but in the end, my best response was to ignore the attacks and do my job. (Sandberg, 2016)

Sandberg was obviously hurt by these comments, but channeled her emotions into a positive response showing a high level of self-regulation. Mayer is also able to effectively channel her innate introversion into extroversion according to her interview with *Vogue*:

She suffers from shyness... and has had to discipline herself to deal with it. For the first fifteen minutes she wants to leave any party, including one in her own home. "I

will literally look at my watch and say, ‘You can’t leave until time x,’ ” she says. “ ‘And if you’re still having a terrible time at time x, you can leave.’ She has learned that if she makes herself stay for a fixed period, she often gets over her social awkwardness and ends up having fun. (Weisberg, 2013)

Mayer is inherently shy, however she regulates her inherent shyness by forcing herself to interact and engage in social settings. Mayer and Sandberg show an aptitude for regulating their own emotions and feelings in certain situations, whereas Meg Whitman displays an ability to regulate her own opinions to create an atmosphere of openness in her board meetings:

As in any group of people, some are more assertive and some are more comfortable speaking one-on-one with the CEO. I would withhold my opinion and make sure every board member stated his or hers so that we developed a tone of openness and responsibility on the board. Every person would be respected for what he or she had to say, but I also made it clear that opinions needed to be shared. (Whitman, 2010)

A few hallmarks of self-regulation are openness to change and comfort with ambiguity.

Whitman shows she is comfortable with hearing others opinions and is open to their ideas: exhibiting a hallmark of self-regulation. Susan Wojcicki shows both an openness to change and a comfort with ambiguity during her 2014 commencement address at Johns Hopkins University. She simply states:

Opportunities -- the good ones -- are messy, confusing and hard to recognize. They're risky. They challenge you. (Wojcicki, 2014).

This quote is not an example of how Wojcicki regulates or directs her emotions, although by explaining the importance of taking advantage of challenging opportunities, she exemplifies the hallmarks of self-regulation. Wojcicki shows an openness to change through speaking about taking advantage of opportunities and displays comfort with ambiguity by acknowledging that good opportunities are messy and confusing.

The self-regulative behaviors expressed by these leaders confirm the potential for a high level of EQ. Sandberg plainly models the ability to quell her feelings of hurt and sadness just as Mayer shows a knack for redirecting her shy tendencies into an extroverted attitude. While Whitman and Wojcicki do not show the apparent aptitude for redirecting emotions in this evidence, they do display two hallmarks of self-regulation: an openness to change and comfort with ambiguity. This evidence concludes that all four women possess the self-regulation component of emotional intelligence.

### **Motivation**

The belief that motivation is required for all successful leaders is a commonly accepted notion. A traditional component of motivation is ambition, a common agentic trait these women share. While ambition is a crucial component to motivation, Goleman goes beyond this conventional interpretation to add that motivation is the drive to "achieve beyond expectations" (Goleman, 2004). The key factor defining motivation as a component of EQ is that leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence are motivated by a "deeply embedded desire to achieve for the sake of achievement" (Goleman, 2004). Intrinsic motivation manifests as a passion for the work itself, a strong desire to achieve, and a commitment to the organization. The four women studied in this thesis all display this component. For instance, Susan Wojcicki displays her motivation through a strong commitment to Youtube in a recent *Forbes* interview:

Our goal at YouTube is to be a platform where anyone in the world can access and share information. We want to give everyone a voice and a chance to succeed, by connecting people and opening up the world. (Vinton, 2016)

Wojcicki is clearly committed to Youtube's company mission, which aligns with Goleman's theory. Sandberg exhibits this same commitment in her desire to make the world a better place:



Throughout my childhood, my parents emphasized the importance of pursuing a meaningful life... I never thought about what I wanted to be, but I thought a lot about what I wanted to do...I hoped to change the world. (Sandberg, 2016)

Sandberg shows she is intrinsically motivated through her aspiration to change the world. The potential to be perceived as successful drives Meg Whitman to achieve, according to her autobiography *The Power of Many*:

Griff [Whitman's husband] sees me start down some road unsure of how to go forward, unclear about whether I can pull it off. He asks good questions and he probes to understand the challenge but he is never discouraging... After I've made progress, he'll say with a big smile, "I can't believe this. At first you didn't have a clue and now you know more than the experts in this field." That makes it fun for me. He respects the work it takes; he knows success is not an entitlement. But he also has faith; he doesn't get so focused on the challenge that I have to prove myself to him, too. It's fun to impress him. It's motivating to me. (Whitman, 2010)

Marissa Mayer, like Whitman, shows a strong desire to achieve, however this ambition often comes at the expense of others, according to her biography, *Marissa Mayer and the Fight to Save Yahoo!*:

That kind of naked ambition was also hard for some people to take. Many early Google employees believed Mayer was too quick to take credit for successful products that were either first imagined by or built on the back end by others (Carlson, 2016)

Although they display different elements of Goleman's motivation component to EQ, these women show a high propensity towards motivation and furthermore all prove to be intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated. Sandberg and Wojcicki seem motivated by the potential to make the world a better place, whereas Mayer and Whitman are motivated by ambition and a strong desire to achieve. This evidence confirms these women exhibit the motivational component of emotional intelligence.

## **Empathy**

Empathy is a relatively commonplace notion in society, but it is rarely praised in business. Goleman argues that empathy, as it pertains to his model, does not mean "adopting others emotions as your own", but rather empathy means "thoughtfully considering employees feelings, along with other factors, in the process of making intelligent decisions" (Goleman, 2004). However, empathy is not limited to a leader's employees. Empathy encompasses the feelings and emotions displayed across cultures. If a leader has empathy, they have the ability to understand and acknowledge the importance of cultural differences. Susan Wojcicki responded to the 2016 Dallas shootings of five Dallas police officers in a blog post she wrote on Youtube's blog saying that "how you use your voice is up to you. But if you can use it to help us all figure out how to live together in respect... we need to hear it. I can't do what you do, but change needs to happen, so let's see what we can do together" (Wojcicki, 2016).

In this empathetic response, Wojcicki shows her understanding of this particular cultural situation. She realizes that many of YouTube's consumers were offended and hurt by the Dallas shootings and Wojcicki chooses to address this issue in an appropriate manner with an empathetic blog post. She shows that she understands and relates to their feelings, therefore showing empathy. It is not surprising that empathetic responses emerge during emotional times. Sheryl Sandberg wrote a moving Facebook post after her husband's death describing her definition of empathy:

I have learned that I never really knew what to say to others in need. I think I got this all wrong before; I tried to assure people that it would be okay, thinking that hope was the most comforting thing I could offer... Real empathy is sometimes not insisting that it will be okay but acknowledging that it is not. (Sandberg, 2015)

Sandberg proves she understands that true empathy means acknowledging other people's emotions and considering those emotions moving forward in the future. This realization came well into her years as COO of Facebook, suggesting that empathy develops with age as Goleman theorized.

Marissa Mayer poses an interesting case in this section. While she comes across as empathetic and gregarious to large crowds, her direct reports believe she is cold and closed off, according to Nicolas Carlson in *Marissa Mayer and the Fight to Save Yahoo!* her direct reports said "it would have been more tolerable if Mayer were an empathetic boss, armed with positive reinforcement, but she was not" (Carlson, 2016). Mayer displays a clear lack of empathy as exhibited by this quotation. The quote came in response to the observation that when Mayer wants something done, "she wants it done right away" (Carlson, 2016). Mayer's unrealistic expectations and the fact that she does not seem to consider her employee's feeling when making intelligent decisions shows she lacks the empathetic component of emotional intelligence.

Meg Whitman is one of the few women who plainly states that she places a high value on empathy in her autobiography, *The Power of Many*:

There is a myth—at least I believe it's a myth—that great success demands that we give up, or at least fudge, our relationship to what most of us recognize as decent, commonsense values. Honesty. Family. Community. Integrity. Generosity. Courage. Empathy. As we climb the corporate ladder, the myth tells us, we have to step on people, stretch the truth when it fits our agenda, and make heartless decisions based only on the bottom line. We are not supposed to ask what is the right thing to do, but rather what is best for our careers or to burnish our reputation. I have never bought into that myth. (Whitman, 2010)

This quote shows that Whitman not only proves that she considers her employees emotions when making important decisions, but she also advises other leaders to do the same.

All the women display empathy except Marissa Mayer, thus Mayer is considered an outlier in this section. This evidence suggests that rather than being berated for simply not showing an empathetic side to her personality, Mayer is actually being critiqued for her lack of empathy. Mayer's colleagues go so far as to say she would be "more tolerable if [she] were an empathetic boss," which undoubtedly illustrates the absence of empathy (Carlson, 2016). Mayer is the only woman who fails to display this component of emotional intelligence. Goleman believes emotional intelligence is not an innate ability, but rather it is a capability a leader can learn (Goleman, 2004). Marissa Mayer's lack of empathy does not indicate a lack of emotional intelligence, but rather suggests empathy is a component of emotional intelligence she needs to cultivate.

### **Social Skill**

Social skill is a culmination of all the components of emotional intelligence. Goleman defines social skill as "friendliness with a purpose" (Goleman, 2004). A leader adept at the social skill component can move people in the direction they desire with skill and charm. Socially skilled people tend to have a knack for building rapport, effectively managing teams, and tend to be popular for good reason. They know how to socialize and network while also leading teams effectively. Sheryl Sandberg, for instance, was praised for her social skill during a *Financial*

*Times* interview:

Nobody doubts her skill at managing difficult colleagues (be that Zuckerberg or Summers); or that she is brilliant at pulling teams together and promoting her company – and herself – with charm and impressive force (Tett, 2013).

Sandberg was Chief of Staff for Larry Summers and clearly knows how to effectively manage teams. She is also known for her ability to make "friends very easily. [She is] very inviting and

welcoming, a good conversationalist. She's interested in other people" according to one of her closest Miami beach friends. While Sandberg builds friendships through her good nature and convivial spirit, Meg Whitman showed an aptitude for managing networks and building rapport early on in her career as a consultant at Bain and Co., according to her book, *The Power of*

*Many*:

What I decided was that I would not make being one of the in crowd my goal. I would just try to be "in with" the in crowd. There's a difference. I didn't try to be like them; I just tried to be likable and fun and very good at what I did. I believe that it's important to be fun to work with and easy to manage, but you can't just be likable. You also need to produce. You have to excel at the tasks you're given and you have to add value to every single project, every conversation where someone seeks your input. (Whitman, 2010)

Meg Whitman entered the workforce at the height of the glass ceiling when it was even more dominated by men than it is today. Whitman understood that she had to slowly work her way into male dominated networks by being both likable and skilled. She learned how to navigate a predominantly male environment to be "in with the in-crowd" at work, thus displaying a high level of social skill in a difficult environment. While Whitman focused on building relationships with her male coworkers, Susan Wojcicki participates in women's groups to build rapport. In an exclusive *Vanity Fair* blog post, Wojcicki writes:

Women's groups have been a lifeline throughout my career, giving me a place to find inspiration, build friendships, and seek support during difficult times. (Wojcicki, 2017)

A hallmark of social skill is the ability to find common ground with other people. Wojcicki shows a knack for this ability by participating in women's groups. Many of these women come from different backgrounds yet she still seeks to make friends and broaden her network.

All the women above show a high level of social skill, but the opinions of Marissa Mayer lead to the belief that she does not display this component of emotional intelligence. Some of Mayer's colleagues even believe she has Asperger's Syndrome, something that would inhibit her social behavior (Carlson, 2014). While this is strictly conjecture, there are whispers from her colleagues. One industry executive who is close to Mayer has a child with Asperger's and recognizes in Mayer the traits that their child possesses (Carlson, 2016). In addition to these rumors, Mayer also displays a sense of apathy when it comes to meeting with her team according to Nicolas Carlson's biography of Mayer:

She had the awful habit of being late, all the time. Every Monday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. California time, Mayer's staff would gather for a three-hour meeting with the boss. Mayer demanded all of her staff across the world would join the call, so executives from New York where it was 6:00 p.m., and Europe, where it was 11:00 p.m. or later, would dial in, too. Inevitably, Mayer would show up at least forty-five minutes late. Some calls started so late Yahoo's executives in Europe didn't hang up till after 3:00 a.m. their time. (Carlson, 2016)

Showing up consistently late to meetings sends a disinterested message to her team. Her lateness sometimes "angered people to their core" (Carlson, 2016). Mayer shows a clear lack of proficiency in managing relationships with her team by constantly being late to meetings and thus is the only woman studied in this thesis that lacks social skill.

## **Summary**

An understanding of what constitutes emotional intelligence is "important not only because the capacity is so central to leadership but because people strong in some of its elements can be utterly lacking in others, sometimes to disastrous effect" (Ovans, 2015). The women studied in this thesis all display certain components of emotional intelligence, but Marissa Mayer is the only woman who shows an absence of two components: empathy and social skill. Lacking

certain components of emotional intelligence does not necessarily make someone a bad leader, but research suggests the most effective leaders will display at least four components (Batool, 2013). Therefore, we can deduce Mayer may not be perceived as the most effective leader.

However, this evidence does confirm that Sheryl Sandberg, Susan Wojcicki, and Meg Whitman all exhibit emotional intelligence, whereas Mayer has some components she needs to cultivate.

### **Dimensions of Silicon Valley Culture**

This past section attempted to outline the components of emotional intelligence these women displayed in their careers. The following section seeks to assess how the agentic and communal traits these women exhibit align with the characteristics inherent to Silicon Valley culture. This section is separated based on Accenture's findings on the five tenets of Silicon Valley culture:

- Laid back, but ready for action
- Committed, yet independent
- Competitive, yet cooperative
- Pragmatic, yet optimistic
- Extrinsically motivated, yet intrinsically fulfilled

This section provides an analysis of the agentic and communal traits these women exhibit and how those traits align with Silicon Valley's culture.

### **Laid Back, But Ready for Action**

Silicon Valley (SV) is geographically situated in what is considered to be a laid-back area. California is known for its "mellow vibes" and good nature, and while Accenture found that some of this culture presents itself in Silicon Valley, it is offset by a fast-paced lifestyle that

balances on the point of frantic, and strict deadlines. Silicon Valley has a strong desire to get things done quickly; to fail and fail fast. Companies understand failure is a part of the creative process and therefore want to move past that stage quickly. Therefore, Silicon Valley cannot agonize over every flaw of a product. Employees cannot afford to be perfectionists. A common mantra in Silicon Valley is "Do it. Try it. Fix it." and then repeat until you have a product ready for the market place (Harris & Alter, 2017). This mantra results in the presence of certain personality types. This dimension of SV culture requires that leaders be risk takers, anti-perfectionists, and decision makers. The ability to take risks and be decisive are both agentic qualities, which gives rise to the belief that a certain level of agency is needed to succeed in Silicon Valley. Marissa Mayer, for instance, constantly reminds herself to "be bold" and take risks in business situations:

Mayer says she's carried Sergey's parting advice - "Don't forget to be bold" – with her ever since taking the helm at Yahoo and that it's been instrumental to some of the decisions she's made. She said his words were replaying in her head as she made the call to acquire Tumblr and guide her decision around what to do with Yahoo's stake in the Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba (Warell, 2015).

Mayer exemplifies the agentic qualities of boldness and risk taking in this example. Meg Whitman calls this ability a "bias for action" and believes it is crucial when leading an organization:

A bias for action is about a leader moving an organization quickly to capture opportunities, knowing full well that mistakes will be made but that the organization can adjust and fix mistakes and ultimately be more successful than it could have been by waiting for conditions to be perfect. The way I usually put it is, the price of inaction is far greater than the cost of making a mistake. You do not have to be perfect to be an effective leader, but you cannot be timid. (Whitman, 2010)



Whitman understands when action is required, perfectionism is the enemy, much like Sandberg, who candidly states:

Trying to do it all and expecting that it all can be done exactly right is a recipe for disappointment. Perfection is the enemy. (Sandberg)

Susan Wojcicki also understands the downsides of perfectionism, in fact anti-perfectionism runs deep to her core. Wojcicki's mother instilled in her children an anti-perfectionist philosophy, insisting they do not need to be perfect and should instead be confident. This was her way of instilling confidence in her children as Wojcicki's mother describes below

It was part of a larger philosophy of anti-perfectionism that has given her daughters confidence as they've excelled in male-dominated industries like science and tech. "They all try to do their best, but they forgive themselves," she says. "A perfectionist does not forgive themselves for doing something that isn't perfect. And they do. They don't hold themselves to blame. (Alter, 2016)

The characteristics expressed in this dimension of Silicon Valley culture include risk taking, decisiveness, confidence, and boldness, all of which are agentic traits. These women express the agentic qualities mentioned in the evidence, which leads to the conclusion that not only do these women display a certain level of agency but they also exhibit the traits important to this dimension of Silicon Valley culture.

### **Committed, Yet Independent**

It is no surprise that employees in Silicon Valley want to "change the world". That phrase is often thrown around by people in the tech industry, but Accenture found an interesting element in this desire to change the world. They found that while "seventy-one percent of survey respondents profess allegiance to their employers," Silicon Valley employees are most strongly committed to the overall cause of creating a better future through technology (Harris & Alter,

2017). One of the main personality characteristics comprised in this dimension of Silicon Valley culture is the communal quality, loyalty. This does not mean loyalty to the employer, but loyalty to the coworkers and cause itself. This loyalty is balanced with the agentic trait, independence. Silicon Valley employees tend to act "more like independent contractors, moving from job to job" (Harris & Alter, 2017). This results in a mobile talent base in the region that is committed to the goal of making the world a better place through technology.

The balancing act between agency and communion is apparent in this dimension of Silicon Valley culture. Loyalty is commonly labeled a communal trait, whereas independence is an agentic trait. This means Silicon Valley culture welcomes both agency and communion in its employees. Thus in order to navigate this aspect of Silicon Valley culture, these women must balance agency with communion. Sheryl Sandberg exhibited both loyalty and independence when she switched careers and left Google to work for Facebook. She shows independence by switching companies, but loyalty to the tech industry. Some of her colleagues say loyalty is one of her best characteristics according to an article in the Miami Herald:

Loyalty is one of her many good qualities as a person. Her loyalty and good-nature extend beyond her business influences according to one of her closest friends: She makes friends very easily. Very inviting and welcoming, a good conversationalist. She's interested in other people. She doesn't speak about herself, never. It's 'How can I help you? What is your interest?' She focuses on others. (Dorschner, 2012)

Sheryl Sandberg is loyal to her friends and business partners, but she showed independence by switching careers. Sandberg's choice exemplified those traits, whereas Meg Whitman exhibits these qualities through her hiring process. Whitman understands an important aspect of team management is "improving loyalty and morale" (Whitman, 2010). However, Whitman claims she values independence because it brings unique perspectives. She feels "energized by other people

with new and different perspectives from [her] own, not by an echo chamber" (Whitman, 2010). Whitman realizes the power of engendering loyalty from a team, but also understands the importance of being independent and having different perspectives.

Marissa Mayer has been critiqued for her lack of loyalty to Google. When she took the CEO position at Yahoo! Business Insider wrote a post with the byline: "Some Tech People Are Shocked That Marissa Mayer Is Going To Yahoo: 'Where's The Loyalty?'". Many people were surprised by her decision to leave Google, but Mayer, like Sandberg, shows a strong sense of independence in her decision to switch companies. Some cynics believe Mayer displayed a lack of loyalty to Google in her move to Yahoo!, however the reality is that Mayer worked at Google for over twelve years. This long term choice to stay at Google in an era where many dot-com companies continually emerged shows loyalty to Google. Her decision to move to Yahoo was an independent choice and stemmed from her desire to have more of an impact in the business.

Susan Wojcicki shows commitment to technology causes through her many blog posts. Wojcicki frequently writes opinion editorials speaking about causes she supports or ideas in which she believes. She wrote a blog post showing her support for Girls Who Code:

As someone who runs a company at the intersection of technology and media, I want to help change the perceptions of women and technology we see today. So, as part of our Made with Code and media perception initiatives, I'm excited that we're supporting award-winning documentary filmmaker Lesley Chilcott—of "An Inconvenient Truth" and "Waiting for Superman" fame—on her next film, "CODEGIRL." (Wojcicki, 2015)

This post appeared on Google's official blog, and yet it did not mention any Google products in the article. Wojcicki shows commitment in bringing more young women into tech; a cause greater than Google. Wojcicki remains independent from Google in this article through her choice to not mention Google in writing the article.

All of the women mentioned in this section show both commitment and independence in their decisions. Commitment and loyalty can be construed as synonymous, and loyalty is labeled a communal quality, while independence is agentic. This dimension of Silicon Valley culture shows that employees value certain agentic and communal traits. This evidence provides an example of how these women balance agency with communion therefore fulfilling the characteristics associated with this cultural aspect of Silicon Valley.

### **Competitive, Yet Cooperative**

The importance of both agency and communion is also observed in this cultural element of Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley is one of the few places that understands the importance of balancing competition with cooperation. Employees believe competition drives products to be the best version, but that cooperation, or collaboration, with cross functional teams is also necessary to succeed. For example, Silicon Valley office spaces are designed to encourage collaboration. Companies like Google and Facebook eliminate cubicles from their office environment and replace them with an open floor plan design to encourage "face to face communication" (Harris & Alter, 2017). One hallmark of a collaborative environment is the option to participate in peer networks. In fact, participation in peer networks is considered more necessary than optional in Silicon Valley. More than one-third of the Silicon Valley professionals surveyed by Accenture stated that "they would be willing to help somebody in their peer network even if doing so went against their own company's interest" (Harris & Alter, 2017). While competition to build the best product prevails Silicon Valley culture, collaboration and networking are equally important. Meg Whitman learned to balance her competitive nature with collaboration when playing sports as a child:

I gravitated to playing sports with my siblings and on any team I could join. And I consider that opportunity critical to my eventual success in business... I participated in many different sports as a child—tennis, figure skating, basketball, lacrosse, and competitive swimming. I liked team sports the best. When I'm pulling a business team together, I still use those basketball aphorisms I learned as a young person: "Let's pass the ball around a little before game time." "Do we need man-to-man or zone defense?" (Whitman, 2010)

Meg Whitman admits to having a "competitive nature" but she balances this through collaboration and teamwork. She learned to balance her competitive spirit by participating in a sports team. Sheryl Sandberg also admits to her competitive nature saying that she has "competitive [and] type-A fibers" inherent to her being, but she shows her understanding of the power of teamwork in her book, *Lean In*:

By definition, all organizations consist of people working together. Focusing on the team leads to better results for the simple reason that well-functioning groups are stronger than individuals. Teams that work together well outperform those that don't. And success feels better when it's shared with others. (Sandberg, 2016)

Sandberg shows a balance of agency and communion by admitting to her competitive spirit and publicly acknowledging the power of teams. Susan Wojcicki shows her high regard for teamwork and networks through her participation in peer groups, she says that "women's groups have been a lifeline throughout [her] career" (Wojcicki, 2017). Wojcicki also acknowledges the importance of collaboration in a recent commencement address. She claims her time in school "had a profound impact on my career, teaching me the importance of collaboration and innovative thinking" (Wojcicki, 2017). Wojcicki places a high importance on collaboration, but also knows how to deal with competition in the marketplace. She launched the subscription based model, YouTube Red, which competed directly with "video services such as Vessel and Vimeo" (Boorstin, 2015). Wojcicki displays her collaborative nature internally and showcases

her competitive nature externally by competing directly with YouTube's rivals in the marketplace.

Much like the other women, Marissa Mayer is no stranger to competition. She exhibits her competitive nature in how she leads Yahoo. As the CEO of Yahoo, she implemented a bell curve to rate employees on performance. In an open discussion with Mayer, one employee asked whether the newly implemented bell curve would negatively effect teamwork and morale. Mayer responded with this quotation:

It's not a stack rank. It's sort of a bucket sort. So you end up either in exceeds, meets, strongly exceeds, things like that. But it's not a stack rank. As a result, I don't think it has some of the same characteristics [such as lowering teamwork incentives and employee morale] as an actual stack rank. (Carlson, 2016)

While Mayer encourages a competitive spirit in her employees by implementing a bell curve, she also weakens teamwork incentives. One Yahoo employee critiqued this implementation in an open chat with Mayer:

We USED to work in an amazingly collaborative environment and feed off of and inspire one another. To ensure we retain our jobs QPR has left us with no other option but to shift how we work into an ultra competitive mindset instead of a collaborative one. Why would I help out my fellow designers, or other teams, or share an opportunity when I can just gather them up myself to ensure my job? (Carlson, 2014)

Mayer knows how to foster a competitive environment, but not a collaborative one according to this employee. She has not mastered the balance of competition and collaboration, a balance that Silicon Valley finds important. Mayer is an outlier in this dimension of Silicon Valley culture and seems to manifest her competitive nature more frequently than her collaborative side.

These women all show their competitive nature in this evidence, only Sandberg, Whitman, and Wojcicki exhibit collaboration in line with competition. Mayer is again an outlier.

She struggles with cultivating a collaborative environment at work and is not able to balance her agentic and communal qualities in this example.

### **Pragmatic, Yet Optimistic**

This dimension of Silicon Valley culture is much like the first notion, that employees in Silicon Valley are "ready for action". The main difference in this section is the addition of an optimistic attitude. People in Silicon Valley are pragmatic "in that they understand that successes are typically built on many failures," but they also believe most problems can be solved if a person works hard enough (Harris & Alter, 2017). Pragmatic approaches and an optimistic attitude require certain qualities: resilience, risk taking, and patience. Taking risks is a natural step to success, but success does not come easily and patience is necessary to keep pressing on a path to success. The following quotations show these women understand the importance and value of failure on the path to success.

Marissa Mayer is pragmatic, yet optimistic in the sense that she knows her employees will fail, but she is also hopeful that they will succeed in their endeavors, according to *Marissa Mayer and the Fight to Save Yahoo*:

At her second FYI, Mayer said, "I have all kinds of different theories around failure. The first and foremost is: It's totally okay to fail; you just need to fail fast, right? So the idea is: Go ahead, take a chance, fail. Maybe you succeed, maybe you fail, but if you don't end up overinvesting a ton of time in it, you can move on and do the next thing. "Hopefully that will be successful." (Carlson, 2016)

Mayer shows she is pragmatic not just in the knowledge that people will fail, but in her approach to failure. She wants employees to "fail fast," to be pragmatic in failing so that a person can move on the next idea. However, Mayer is also hopeful they will succeed. Mayer wants her

employees to embrace failure much like Sandberg wants young women to embrace leaning in as she states in her book:

Like everyone here, I have great hopes for the members of this graduating class. I hope you find true meaning, contentment, and passion in your life. I hope you navigate the difficult times and come out with greater strength and resolve. I hope you find whatever balance you seek with your eyes wide open. And I hope that you—yes, you—have the ambition to lean in to your career and run the world. Because the world needs you to change it. Women all around the world are counting on you. So please ask yourself: What would I do if I weren't afraid? And then go do it. (Sandberg, 2016)

Sandberg challenges young women to "lean in" to their careers and not be afraid of taking chances. She shows pragmatism in her approach to leaning into the workplace by acknowledging that the business landscape can be difficult to navigate for women and takes time. However, she also shows optimism by "hoping" that these women will lean in to their career and challenging them to do things of which they might be afraid.

Sheryl Sandberg focuses on resilience as a part of success, while Meg Whitman centers on a positive attitude. She provides this appropriate anecdote in her book, *The Power of Many*:

Would you rather have an imperfect Thanksgiving with burned sweet potatoes where you nonetheless are welcoming and everyone is happy to be together, or be in the kitchen fuming and obsessing because you got held up at work and a few things didn't get done quite right? I always say that I think my house is lovely but Martha Stewart would not be impressed. You have to make compromises in life. When you do, focus on the elements that are positive, not on what you lose in the compromise. (Whitman, 2010)

Meg Whitman understands a leader must make compromises in business, and encourages readers to focus on the positive aspects of that compromise exemplifying the optimistic attitude expressed as a part of Silicon Valley culture. She realizes an optimistic attitude in the face of failure is necessary to move forward in a business venture: showing both pragmatism and optimism.



Susan Wojcicki showed both of these components in her decision to work for Google. Wojcicki had a stable job at Intel before coming to work for Google and took a calculated risk in her decision to work for Google. She describes the day she knew she wanted to be a part of Google in her commencement address at John Hopkins University:

One day, something funny happened at work. I opened up my browser to look something up and it turned out Google was down, there was an error page. And I just sat there. I realized I couldn't get my work done because no other search service could find the information. I had become dependent on Google for doing my day-to-day work. Then it hit me: If Google had become so indispensable to me, then maybe the vision that Larry and Sergey had wasn't so crazy... Maybe there was really something to this Googley thing after all. (Wojcicki, 2014)

Wojcicki shows pragmatism in taking a calculated risk to work for Google, and also shows agency in her ability to take a risk and leave a stable job at Intel. Wojcicki also displays an optimistic outlook for Google's future in this narrative. She admits that "it wasn't clear what [she] was supposed to do," but she was patient and believed in Brin and Page's idea. She displayed a level of agency in taking a pragmatic risk to work for Google and coupled that quality with her communal nature by being patient with Google's growth. These women further exemplify their ability to balance agency with communion in this section of evidence.

### **Extrinsically Motivated, Yet Intrinsically Fulfilled**

Silicon Valley poses an interesting dynamic. Employees are extrinsically motivated by factors such as money, promotions, and status, however they are intrinsically fulfilled, meaning they desire an "opportunity to work on something that energizes them and helps them grow professionally" and creates more value for their organization (Harris & Alter, 2017). Silicon Valley members desire an intellectual challenge, but that also want to be appropriately compensated. This means an effective leader in Silicon Valley must not only pay their employees

well, they must provide interesting and challenging work. Silicon Valley employees are purpose-driven and because of this, leaders must be fully committed to the mission of the company.

This element of Silicon Valley culture closely adheres to ideals associated with transformational leadership. Transformational leadership requires that a leader inspire their followers to incite a passion for the company or mission. Research "in the area of transformational leadership has repeatedly shown the benefits of using a communal approach to leading" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Since Silicon Valley employees need to be intrinsically motivated by the purpose of the company, Accenture's research proves these employees value a more transformative approach to leadership.

All of the women studied in this thesis show a strong commitment to the company mission, a passion for their work, and the capability to communicate that mission. Marissa Mayer describes Yahoo's mission in an interview with Business Insider:

It's our heritage, it's where Yahoo started," Mayer says. "As digital content becomes richer, as search and mail become richer, we need to change what the format of that guide is, as we move to mobile, wearables, TVs, cars, and all the other formats in the future. So, we're focused on search, communications, and digital content, all of which we think are incredibly important parts of that role as a guide, and those are the products that we're investing in and building on. (Mayer, 2015)

Mayer takes Yahoo's mission back to the roots of the company, whereas Wojcicki communicates the power of Youtube's mission moving forward in her opinion editorial on Youtube Ads:

I'm incredibly proud of the role YouTube has played in bringing more textured, inspiring stories to life and I'm prouder still that a community of engaged fans is consistently watching and engaging with them. It goes to show that people are hungry for creative that empowers, rather than objectifies. Savvy brands and enlightened creative agencies have a tremendous amount to gain by satisfying those appetites. (Wojcicki, 2016)

These statements show both Mayer and Wojcicki can effectively communicate their company's mission whereas Sheryl Sandberg attests that her passion for Google's mission was what solidified her decision to take the job as she states in *Lean In*:

He told me, "If you're offered a seat on a rocket ship, you don't ask what seat. You just get on." I made up my mind that instant. Google was tiny and disorganized, but it was a rocket ship. And even more important to me, it was a rocket ship with a mission I believed in deeply. (Sandberg, 2016)

Sandberg's passion for Google's mission is ultimately what made her take the job at Google. Meg Whitman shows her passion for eBay through her hiring process. She understands that in order to make appropriate hiring decisions, a leader must be aware of how those decisions are "central to [the company's] mission" (Whitman, 2010). She also realizes intrinsic motivation comes from purpose and validation. Employees must feel validated for their work in order to remain loyal to the company mission:

The fact that you ask someone for help or advice or the benefit of their experience validates them. The appreciation you show when they provide their help and you use it validates them. Later, when you mention where an effective idea came from, it validates them again. Validation motivates and energizes. (Whitman, 2010)

This dimension of Silicon Valley culture focuses less on a balance of communion and agency and more on the value of transformational leadership. These women display a transformative leadership style based on this evidence, which substantiates the research based conclusion that women are "perceived by followers to have higher levels of transformational leadership" (Simola & Turner, 2010). The high value Silicon Valley places on transformational leadership could be a factor in these women's success. Some proponents of a female leadership advantage believe the "conceptualization of successful leadership has changed such that women's presumed communal

abilities may no longer be viewed as a detriment, but rather as an advantage" in certain situations (Rosette & Tost, 2010).

Communal traits are more consistently being linked to effective leadership, specifically those relating to transformational leadership methods, and recent research in transformational leadership shows this style is "comprised of behaviors consistent with communal traits" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). These women exhibit a more transformational approach to leadership and Silicon Valley culture clearly values this method. Therefore, the lack of women in leadership positions cannot be attributed to Silicon Valley's leadership preference because both communal qualities and a transformative approach to leadership are valued by employees.

### **Summary**

This study found that Silicon Valley incorporates both agentic and communal qualities as a part of their culture. Previous research has found that there is a perceived incompatibility between agentic and communal characteristics, yet the elements of Silicon Valley culture prove employees value agency alongside communion (Rosette & Tost, 2010). This evidence aligns with research that suggests "the perceived incompatibility between agentic and communal characteristics may be mitigated or even reversed at the top levels of organizational hierarchy, leading to the existence of a female leadership advantage under certain circumstances" (Rosette & Tost, 2010). This evidence further substantiates the research that "perceptions of agency and communality are not likely to be in conflict for women leaders," meaning that women can succeed by expressing both agency and communion.

Evidence suggests that Silicon Valley employees also value certain elements of transformational leadership relating to intrinsic motivation. This creates an environment in which

women have the potential to succeed in leadership roles. Research has proven that female leaders are more transformational than male leaders and that women are perceived by their "followers to have higher levels of transformational leadership" (Simola, Barling, & Turner, 2010; Eagly, 2007). Transformational leadership behaviors resolve some of the typical "incongruity between leadership roles and the female gender role because these styles are not distinctively masculine" (Eagly, 2007). Since Silicon Valley employees value elements of transformational leadership, specifically intrinsic motivation, and transformational leadership better aligns with women's leadership roles, this evidence gives rise to the belief that the cultural landscape of Silicon Valley may create an environment that posits a female leadership advantage.

### **Discussion**

This research suggests that women may have a leadership advantage in Silicon Valley because their characteristics align with those of Silicon Valley culture, and yet there are so few women leaders in the technology industry. Therein lies the disconnect. This thesis was designed to investigate this disconnect and theories related to effective leadership in Silicon Valley culture in order to understand the personality traits that played a role in Sheryl Sandberg, Marissa Mayer, Susan Wojcicki, and Meg Whitman's ability to navigate the Silicon Valley landscape. The theoretical framework for this thesis was based on Daniel Goleman's model for Emotional Intelligence in the workplace along with an analysis of agency and communion. Findings from autobiographies, biographies, online articles, and blog posts were used to research various personality characteristics of these four women and were then compared to the results of Accenture's survey regarding Silicon Valley culture.

## **Key Findings**

Sheryl Sandberg, Marissa Mayer, Susan Wojcicki, and Meg Whitman exhibit more commonalities than differences on their paths to success in Silicon Valley.

- They all display qualities associated with high levels of emotional intelligence.
- Marissa Mayer lacks certain components of emotional intelligence, although this does not necessarily mean she lacks emotional intelligence.
- They all exhibit personality characteristics inherent to Silicon Valley culture.
- They all balance agency with communion.

## **The Cultural Balancing Act**

While the four women studied in this thesis express characteristics that align with Silicon Valley culture, their success cannot be solely contributed to this notion. Based on Accenture's survey results, Silicon Valley seems to value a balance between agency and communion; a balance the women studied in this thesis all displayed. This balancing act means people perceive women as being "more masculine, particularly in agentic attributes, although not decreasing in feminine qualities" (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Women are not sacrificing their communal nature, but rather they are displaying more agentic qualities in the workforce. The women studied in this thesis all display many agentic qualities, such as confidence, independence, decisiveness, the ability to take risks, assertiveness, and ambition. However, they balance their agency with a communal nature in order to better align with societal expectations.

While the traits expected in business leaders are shifting to include more communal qualities, there is reason to believe some women might be critiqued for displaying high levels of agency based on the evidence in this thesis. Marissa Mayer is an outlier. She displays a higher

level of agency than most of the other women and lacks certain communal traits and elements of emotional intelligence, which could play a part in the negative attention she receives from the media. Many writers have expressed the opinion that Mayer is not an effective leader. *Forbes* posted an article titled "Marissa Mayer: A Case in Poor Leadership" and *Inc.com* wrote an article with the byline, "Marissa Mayer's Top 10 Leadership Mistakes". An overwhelming majority in popular culture believe Mayer is an ineffective leader and my guess is that her inability to balance her higher levels of agency with communal qualities coupled with the fact that she lacks certain elements of emotional intelligence contribute to her negative perception by the media. Based on this thesis, future research should investigate the association between higher levels of emotional intelligence in women and the ability to balance agentic and communal qualities in the workforce. Based on the media's perception of Mayer and her lack of certain components of EQ, I would hypothesize that women with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better able to balance their agency with communion.

### **EQ in these Silicon Valley Women**

All four women show a certain level of emotional intelligence. They elaborate on scenarios that exhibit the various components of Goleman's framework: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. An interesting observation is that most of the evidence presented on emotional intelligence was taken from these women at a later stage in their life and career. Goleman asserts that "emotional intelligence increases with age" and due to the prevalence of evidence from later stages in their careers, this thesis substantiates that conclusion.

Peter Salovey, a forefront researcher on EQ theory, argues that "emotional intelligence is not just one thing" (Salovey, 2010). He asserts that people have a profile of both strengths and weaknesses in regard to emotional intelligence. Salovey uses President Clinton as an example. He asserts that Clinton is extremely qualified in the empathetic area of EQ; however, he utterly lacks the self-regulation component, and yet Clinton is still perceived as an effective and emotionally intelligent leader. This example also pertains to Marissa Mayer. Mayer displays certain EQ components such as motivation and self-awareness, yet she is completely lacking in empathy and social skill. Some research postulates that an effective leader must display at least four components of EQ to be considered effective (Batool, 2013). Based on this tenet of theory, Mayer would not be considered as having a high EQ; however, other researchers, such as Salovey, claim that a leader can still be emotionally intelligent and display weakness in certain emotional areas. Therefore, Mayer could also be considered an emotionally intelligent person who simply needs to cultivate empathy and social skill. For individuals with low emotional intelligence, a "formal learning process" will be necessary to acquire these emotionally based problem-solving skills (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). These opposing interpretations could contribute to the reason as why to Mayer is so disliked by the media, although further research is required to test this hypothesis.

Emotional intelligence is "hypothesized to influence the success with which employees interact with colleagues, the strategies they use to manage conflict and stress, and overall job performance" (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). Sandberg, Whitman, and Wojcicki all display high levels of EQ, which play a part in their success as a leader. Leaders with a high EQ are more likely to be perceived as effective by their followers. Some tenets of popular culture



even believe "emotional intelligence is necessary for success" (Power, 2015). It is interesting to note that many of the characteristics associated with popular culture EQ theories are comprised of both agentic and communal qualities. One blog post writer asserts that emotionally intelligent leaders are adaptable, self-aware, empathetic, anti-perfectionists, balanced, curious, and gracious (Power, 2015). Not only do these qualities present a balance of agency and communion, but they also align with some of the ideals inherent to Silicon Valley culture. This shows that even in popular culture, the leadership narrative are shifting.

### **The Changing Leadership Landscape**

Recent research has shown the characteristics valued in a leader are changing. The Simmons School of Management partnered with Hewlett Packard to conduct a study to better understand the desired traits of male and female leaders in 2015. Their study showed stereotypically masculine traits had flipped to be desired in both men and women business leaders (Ingols, Shapiro, Tyson, & Rogova, 2015). This research suggests people are beginning to value more agentic traits in women leaders and more communal traits in effective leadership overall. Recent research showed that "women's assertiveness—a trait related to agency— has increased during the last 20 years, such that many recent samples show no sex differences in this trait" (Abele, 2003). Male leaders are also adopting more communal traits. There is a "growing realization that men are feminizing their skills in accordance with societal and organizational norms" (Thory, 2012). Popular culture in society is also beginning to value agentic traits in effective female leaders as well. *Business Insider* published an article about the "6 Personality Traits of High-Performing Women" with stereotypically labeled masculine traits, assertiveness and aggressiveness, being at the top of the list (Goudreau, 2015). Male leaders are beginning to

display more communal traits, and female leaders are now being praised by the media for showing certain agentic traits such as ambition. This leads people to believe that a balance of both agentic and communal traits is what makes an effective leader.

The evidence regarding Silicon Valley culture suggests Silicon Valley may be an environment in which women can better succeed, at least theoretically. Employees value both communion and agency, meaning that women leaders are not necessarily subject to receiving negative perceptions about their perceived agency in their leadership role. Therefore, once women reach the C-level in a Silicon Valley company, their ability to balance agency with communion is actually beneficial for their leadership position since it aligns with Silicon Valley cultural values. One idea to consider is this advantage may only exist once the woman is in a top leadership position, not while on her path to success during the early stages of her career. Role Congruity Theory exists when "perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success" (Eagly, 2007 ). This theory is evident across Silicon Valley. This research shows women are theoretically well-suited for leadership positions in Silicon Valley, yet the actuality of the culture seems to move women out of the industry before they can reach their potential. Silicon Valley women in C-level positions seem to be compatible with their leadership roles, yet research suggests young women may be incompatible with their roles based on the information from the section, "The Dark Side of Silicon Valley". This research proves women are especially suited to leadership in Silicon Valley, since the industry prizes leaders with traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine traits, yet the technology industry's misogynistic culture may be driving women out of the profession early.

### **Conclusion**

The women studied in this thesis have managed to endure the pressures of Silicon Valley when so many other women left the industry. Sheryl Sandberg, Marissa Mayer, Susan Wojcicki, and Meg Whitman are not the only notable women in Silicon Valley who have made it to the top, although they are some of the most recognized. These women set themselves apart from those leaving Silicon Valley's tech industry in droves due to their confidence, tenacity, resilience, and ability to lead in a transformational style. This research suggests women are well suited to leadership positions because of their high level of emotional intelligence and ability to balance agency with communion.

Furthermore, women are especially suited to leadership in Silicon Valley due to its unique environment. Since the industry prizes leaders with both masculine and feminine qualities, women should, theoretically, be able to succeed in the technology industry. This holds true for women who can make it past the young years in their career and maneuver the sexist culture apparent in Silicon Valley. In order to combat the disconnect between women being well-suited for leadership positions in Silicon Valley and the tech industry's lack of female executives, women can do two things:

1. Women can cultivate higher levels of emotional intelligence.
2. Women can learn to balance their communal nature with masculine agentic traits.

While women can employ tactics to become better suited for leadership roles in Silicon Valley, this burden does not fall entirely on women. The tech industry must better address the reasons why women leave the industry in the first place even though they are well-suited for the profession, although more research is necessary to articulate and address those causes.

So, in conclusion, women can leverage their emotional intelligence and balanced traits in Silicon Valley leadership roles. However, the tech industry must undertake to identify the reasons women leave in order to take advantage of more female transformational leaders, because if there is one fact we cannot ignore moving forward, it is that women make excellent leaders in Silicon Valley.

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## **Biography**

Meredith G. Trapp is a San Antonio native and moved to Austin for college in 2012. She enrolled in the Plan II Honors program and studied Marketing at the McCombs School of Business in addition to her Plan II Honors degree. She studied European History in Vienna, Austria the summer of 2014 and International Business her senior year at Bocconi University in Milan, Italy. In college, she was the Program Coordinator for Texas 4000 where she rode a bicycle from Austin, TX to Anchorage, AK. She also worked as a marketing intern at Target in Minneapolis, MN. She graduated with Honors in 2017 and will work for IBM as a Client Relationship Representative in Dallas, TX.